

Drivers and Barriers to Change to Governance in Small-Scale Forestry

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Abstract The progressive introduction of new modes of governance promoted by the international dialogue on forests during the last 20 years has resulted in a concrete change of the management of the forests, with a new style of relationship between the public authority and the local actors. The change has been considerable in some specific situations, for instance when the State plays a major role in public decisions and when the continuing economic transformation increases the importance of private estates. In both cases, small-scale forestry is especially concerned. Based on detailed examples selected in various situations where this change is significant, in western Europe (Belgium, France, Germany) and in transitioning (Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine) and developing (Marocco) countries, this special issue of the *Small-scale Forestry* sheds a new light on the capability of small-scale forestry to adapt to a transformation of the system of public decision-making. In most cases analysed, the barriers to adaptation, usually presented as resulting from fragmentation of the management decisions and a great number and diversity of stakeholders, also appear as drivers to change, in a global process where networks of actors are recomposed and power redistributed along a new scheme of national and regional links.

Keywords Forest policy · Forest governance · Private forestry · Participatory forest management

Introduction

In many international and national contexts, *governance* has become a fashionable word, frequently used by politicians and decision-makers to design a new approach

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to both policy and management based on the association of stakeholders at various levels and the consideration of market mechanisms (Kjaer 2004). Opinions, strategies, concept setting and even theories on governance may differ depending on what is considered as a priority (Pierre 2000; Pierre and Peters 2000). However, there is a broad consensus on the fact that modes of decision-making are changing.

Forestry is not an exception, and it is even especially concerned, because in this field, policy and management tools remain characterised by conventional modes which are now presented as obsolete. If in forestry the change is important, it is even more so in small-scale forestry, because of various elements including: a great number of owners (considered here as actors); difficulty in linking global statements and local reality; and impossibility of addressing the issue of development within a sectoral perspective, without considering how other sectors contribute to revenue of small-scale estates. How do these barriers work for breaking down the process of change? Is there empirical evidence of situations where the barriers have been overcome? Under what conditions can change in governance be successful in small-scale forestry? Those are the main questions which are intended to be raised in this special issue, to which this short concept paper forms an introduction.

Recent Progress in the Evolution of Small-Scale Forestry Policy

As seen in general terms, a transition process is presently on the way, from top-down regulations and techniques based on administrative expertise and practice, to bottom-up *mechanisms* linked to market and built up on broad involvement of stakeholders. Coming from a criticised conventional style of *government*, forest management and policy are now moving towards *governance*, which is the word used for designating the formal aspects of this change in paradigm.

As mentioned by Rametsteiner (this issue), the introduction of modes of governance in forestry implies thinking of forest issues in a redefined framework with contributions of various actors (participation and partnership), at various levels of decision-making (international, national, regional, local), in connection with other sectors (*inter-sectorality*). Governance is an iterative process promoting adaptive management, monitored by means of a new type of *multi-disciplinary* expertise.

In most cases, this new framework works more easily in national statements than in concrete local management, especially as far as small-scale forestry is concerned. As seen at the global level, the fragmentation of small-scale estates provides a barrier to setting up a system of *multi-actor* decision-making: how to deal with so numerous various stakeholders using the same instruments for both policy and management?

The transfer to governance principles is not always evident in countries with a democratic culture, and change in governance is even more difficult in countries in transition to market economy, where the whole system of decision-making is to be changed.

Basing on examples in Central and Eastern Europe, Nijnik et al. (this issue) explain that in such countries, this transfer needs strong national and regional

policies promoting involvement of actors and guaranteeing institutional support. Although the most concerned stakeholders are convinced that small-scale private forestry may provide various benefits to both individuals and the society, the transition process in those countries is very slow. In those countries, the privatisation process based on economic considerations more often comes down to a restitution of properties to descendants from previous owners, which is a pure political decision. This redistribution of rights and revenues may find opponents in the State sphere.

To reach such a new framework for forest policy and management decisions, some progressive steps are needed indeed, corresponding to changes in policy orientation, legislation, program setting and institutional functioning. Depending upon the country and the forestry and policy situations, this process may be more or less rapid and complete, due to a variety of drivers and barriers.

If governance, which covers both policy and management issues, is a major challenge for all types of forests and forestry structures, this is even more the case for the small-scale forestry, for a number of reasons. First, as previously said, small-scale forestry involves multiple forest decision-makers in a context where none of them is in a position to analyse the overall situation, and to find adapted solutions. Participation and, even more, partnership, are more than ever needed, and this is why governance is a challenge of particular interest in small-scale forestry with many stakeholders. Up to now, most of the participatory approaches and techniques have not been well suited to the situations when a large number of involved actors increases the level of incompatibility of the related demands, and when the result is necessarily a defined concrete partnership among similar interests. Managing small-scale forestry comes down to managing a diversity, and not necessarily a coherence.

Another complexity, at the small-scale level of management, is that the rationale of decision-makers depends mainly on situations and interests to be found outside the forestry field. Because most of the landowners' interests depend on incomes other than from forest management, forestry often takes a residual place in their strategy. In these conditions, it is difficult to pilot small-scale forest management from only inside the sector. Intersectoral means are to be given high priority, and they are more complicated to establish. A further problem is that small size of forest estates increases the separation between the local decisions and global policies. Whilst the former are place-based and directly oriented by a defined context, the latter aim at general goals which cannot take into account all individual situations. Sometimes, the gap is not only formal, but conceptual, so that governing small-scale forestry actions becomes of low priority.

The deductive framework of a decision-making process, supposed to balance the multiple levels of authority in a coherent *multi*-sided system, does not work easily in the case of small-scale forestry policy and management. Present research being carried out in the AgroParisTech-ENGREF Laboratory of Forest Policy in Nancy, France, shows that in both developed and developing countries, this logical chain is characterised by a determinant importance of the international agreements and of the regional strategies. This is of course true for many other forest governance conditions, although in the case of small-scale forestry, the link is disrupted at the levels of local management and national policy, creating a greater gap in the chain of forest governance decisions.

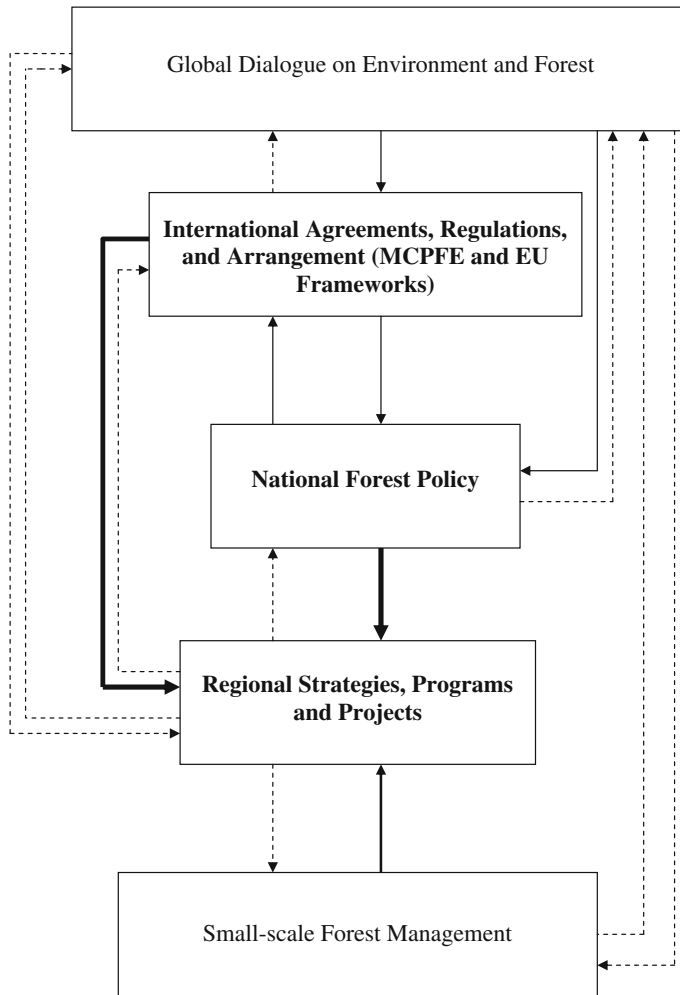


Fig. 1 Case of a European Union country. Occasional/residual indirect links (dotted arrow head), permanent regular links (solid arrow head), important determinant link (bold arrow head)

Certainly some differences may be found between the working of this *multi*-level system in developed countries and developing and transitioning countries, due to the respective roles of international agreements and donors (cf. Figs. 1 and 2).

Inductive Links at Different Levels of Governance of Small-Scale Forestry

In European countries, the prescriptions of the international dialogue on forests are translated by the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of the Forests in Europe (MCPFE) and, especially in EU members, retained by the EU institutions. As

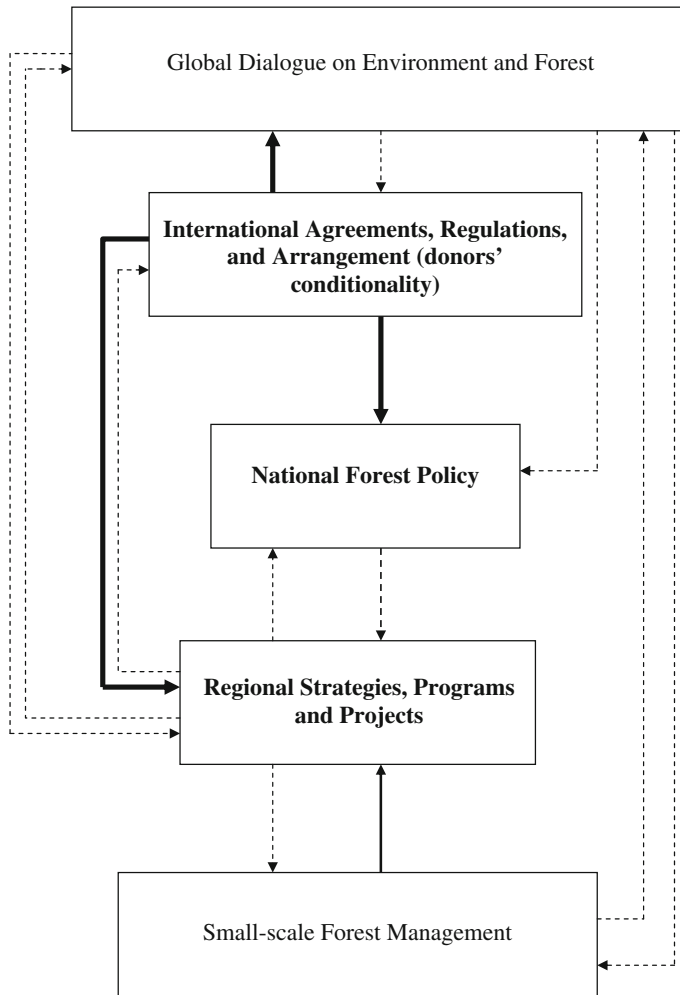


Fig. 2 Case of a developing or transitioning country. Occasional/residual indirect links (dotted arrow head), permanent regular links (solid arrow head), important determinant link (bold arrow head)

detailed through the criteria and indicators of the Programme of Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC), the guidelines for sustainable forest management are first defined at regional level, where small-scale forestry issues are concerned. Although all of those guidelines consist of non-binding references, they provide a basis for new governance instruments supposed to be more adapted to the local situations than the previous general ones which were defined at the national level. The national forest policies can benefit from these new guidelines, for instance with the formulation of national forestry programs (NFPs), but this change in discourse has finally no major incidence in small-scale forestry management and policy at this level of public decision-making. Most of the examples of changes in

the modes of governance in European countries concern management and institutional arrangements more related to larger public forests than to small-scale private ones.

Developing and transitioning countries are basically dependent on the donors' requirements. In this case too, the donors' conditions are usually expressed through the terms of references elaborated for programs and projects which are also mainly addressed at the regional or local levels. Because those projects are usually space-based and orientated towards local development, they have some chance to address more-or-less directly the issues of small-scale forestry management. In contrast to the European situation, the changes here are being introduced over a short period as a whole comprehensive package, and not progressively and sporadically. However, in both cases, small-scale forest management is never directly derived from policy instruments, even when those are defined at regional and local levels.

The Gap Between Global Policies and Local Practices

The discrepancy between the logic of policy reforms at the national level, and the rationale of local management practices, is surely symptomatic of the transformation of public decisions into individual ones. But in the case of small-scale forestry, this discrepancy comes to a level which may inhibit any possibility of change towards governance. This is particularly the case in countries where a forest administration, ruled by old rigid top-down command-and-control norms, is supposed to co-ordinate actions at the local level which are based on completely different and incompatible dynamics, a situation which is frequent in developing countries.

To illustrate this situation, Aubert et al. (this issue) describe the opposition between two logics acting in the High Atlas region of Morocco. Local people there use the forest resource basing on common non-written integrated customs adapted to the severe conditions of the area, defining a mode of management which is considered by the nominal forestry law as destructive and anarchic. At the same time, the forest administration, considering all woodlands as being State-owned, implements regulations designed to restrict human access to this basic resource, with no consideration of the social context. Because everybody is both conscious of a risk of hard conflicts and doubting that a one-sided solution would solve the crisis, none of the parties clearly develops its own demands to the other. This absence of dialogue finally leads to non-sustainable forms of rural and forestry management.

From their empirical survey of the evolution of local practices, the authors conclude that a return to the traditional customs would not be relevant. Although there exist some signals of economic and policy changes in this country leading to the emergence of new forms of representation of the civil society (especially the associations), they see few moves towards a logic of governance. Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are certainly pushing for a new framework, promoting negotiation through a strategic perspective, but the results are highly dependent upon the local conditions.

The Invention of the ‘Win–Win’ Concept

If difficulties really exist in the transition to governance as regards to small-scale forestry, there are also attempts to have local actors involved in the new mechanisms of development.

Some success stories provide examples of such dynamics of change, with various impacts on fragmented forest landscapes. Dedeurwaerdere (this issue) shows that the grouping of small-scale owners is more effective when coming from bottom-up network building than when it depends only on a legislative framework. In Flanders, the effectiveness in changes (management plans promoting opening-up of forests massifs to the public) has emerged more from a continuous *gradual process of social learning* arising from various mechanisms, built up by the members of the related local associations, than from modifications in the policy and institutional design. In a way, governance has arisen here from the local level, through concrete experimentation, and not from the changes in the modes of government. Even if there are technical limits to this initiative in terms of sustainability of the resource, these dynamics make a major difference in terms of modes of governance. In this example in Flanders, people’s awareness and interest directly generates the process of change in small-scale forestry governance.

Giessen and Böcher (this issue) present an opposite example in Germany where the public support is determinant, but comes from outside the forestry sector, through the European directives on land management. In contrast to the Flanders case, here the global *policy frame* has no objective to enhance the small-scale forestry development in particular, but is focused on promoting place-based sustainable management. It is not clear yet how this set of regulations provides benefits for fragmented forests, but the authors argue that these modalities of decision-making at the local level, called *regional governance*, form a framework enabling the promotion of small-scale management when emphasising the role of local knowledge for political problem-solving, thus increasing *policy acceptance* and legitimacy. In this case, governance also comes from the local level, through investing a governance frame which was not initially destined to address the specific issue. Here the institutions and public rules play the major role.

These two examples may appear as completely different, but in fact both show the importance of processes and mechanisms in building up governance based on a mutual acceptance of a set of rules and duties commonly constructed by stakeholders who have an interest in doing so. Thus, the governance scheme resulting from such a process materialises from a consensus between various stakeholders’ interests on the one hand, and between local and global interests on the other, leading to what is usually defined by the term of *win–win* situation.

The Logic of Stakeholders’ Acceptance of New Modes of Governance

A question that arises from the above empirical evidence is why is it possible to change to governance mechanisms in some cases, and not in other situations? The usual explanation places particular importance on contextual factors. In various

conditions, especially of the State administration authority, the transition works through a number of paths, and with varying speeds. In this framework, ethical and cultural aspects, considerations on economic behaviour of the owners, together with rules on State authority and structures, are commonly presented as strong determinants in the transition modes. This is why the changes, if any, occur so differently in Morocco, Belgium, Germany and Eastern Europe. The policy elements chosen usually aim at promoting people awareness, capacity building and institutional reform.

Kouplevatskaya-Buttoud (this issue) suggests another explanation for the logic of change, considering any system of governance as a framework for re-distributing *power* among networks of actors. She uses two examples of quite different situations of small-scale forest management (one in Europe and one in Central Asia) to demonstrate that a move to governance, expressed through a *double spiral of development*, is rather controlled by the major stakeholders. The most powerful actors only are able, whilst re-defining the issue, to gain ownership of the concept that they instrumentalize in order to consolidate as much as possible their initial positions. Certainly the introduction of so important changes in the policy process results in changes in the partnership framework, giving more room for non-represented interests in some cases, and more generally redefining the alliances between stakeholders. However, basically the power of the strongest actors results as maintained, as if a global balance in the decision-making complex was found from changing the procedures, but not the elements essential for its identity. This *resilience* of policy systems is theorised in the paper, and proposed as a relevant framework for understanding and assessment of the various forms of transition to governance mechanisms.

As far as small-scale forestry is concerned, the gap between global policy and local management, which appears as a basic determinant for structuring the transition to new modes of governance, finally results in being both a barrier and a driver. It is a barrier, because it evidently does not facilitate the formulation of a solution, which is necessarily a multi-facets partnership among multiple players with many interests and objectives. It is also a driver, because the opposition between the various competing interests directly structures the social and policy discussion which is needed for finding a solution. In the transition process, the possible beneficiaries in terms of income and employment (smaller owners) face stakeholders who fear losing economic or symbolic positions (larger owners, civil servants), in a way that this conflicting debate directly redefines the issue and provides the mechanism for consensus finding.

Certainly there is still much progress to be made before the new modes of governance adapted to the development of small-scale forestry become effective. The examples given in this special issue are just some of the cases to be dealt with. Some experience exists in various countries, which deserves to be assessed and discussed. Some additional elements may be found in Buttoud (2008), to draw a parallel between the situations in Europe (Sweden, Finland) and Southeast Asia, and the experience in USA and Australia. More generally, a comparative analysis and typology of processes of change in governance processes in small-scale forestry in

various countries in the world, could help in leading to success stories through taking adaptive decisions.

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